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A METHOD FOR OBTAINING PHOTO PROPERTY RELEASE

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention relates to the digital acquisition of obtaining property releases, and more particularly to systems for obtaining and managing digitally acquired property releases.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 Photo Property release forms and Model Release forms are often required by professional photographers to gain permission to use their subject's image (e.g., sell, publish, reproduce). These documents specify the conditions under which a subject's image may be used (e.g., financial compensation, duration of use, and images included).

15 Traditionally, such agreements have been described through the use of a paper-based system where the participant signs a legal release form subsequent to image capture. The photographer typically modifies the release form so that the correct terms are specified. In addition, they must catalog the release form in some way so that he/she is certain the correct release is associated with the photographed images for which permission has been granted. For situations where multiple individuals are required to grant permission for a single photographic release, the situation becomes more complicated. For these situations, the professional must ensure that signatures have been obtained for each individual and that the proper signature is associated with the proper individual within the image. Further, depending on the circumstances in which the photographer is operating, performing these secondary (image and paper management) tasks may distract the photographer from performing their primary task of capturing the currently evolving scene.

25 There is a need, therefore, for an improved system for managing the largely paper-based method of secondary (e.g., photo release) document management noted above.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

30 In accordance with one aspect of the present invention there is provided a system for managing photo releases, comprising:

a digital capture device for capturing an original image having at least one individual;

a device for producing a representative image of the captured original image;

5 a display device for displaying the representative image and for displaying a release associated with the at least one individual and the representative image; and

an input device associated with the display device for receiving an authorization signature by the at least one individual with respect to the photo release.

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention there is provided a method for managing photo releases, comprising:

capturing a digital image, an original image of at least one individual;

15 producing a representative image of the captured original image;

displaying the representative image and a photo release associated with the at least one individual with respect to the original image;

obtaining an authorization signature by the at least one individual with respect to the original image; and

20 associating the authorization signature as metadata with respect to the original image.

These and other aspects, objects, features and advantages of the present invention will be more clearly understood and appreciated from a review of the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments and appended claims and by reference to the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the detailed description of the preferred embodiments of the invention presented below, reference is made to the accompanying drawings in which:

Fig. 1 illustrates a system made in accordance with the present invention;

Fig. 2 illustrates a flow diagram of the operation of the system of Fig. 1; and

5 Fig. 3 illustrates various screen displays of the display device of the system of Fig. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The invention has been described in detail with particular reference
10 to certain preferred embodiments thereof, but it will be understood that variations and modifications can be effected within the spirit and scope of the invention.

Referring to Fig. 1, there is illustrated a block diagram of an embodiment of a system 10 for managing photo releases in accordance with the present invention. As shown in Fig. 1, system 10 includes a digital capture device
15 10 for capturing digital images, an electronic display device 14 for displaying an representative image 16 of a captured image and for displaying an associated release information form 18, an input device 20 by which information may be entered on the release form and where an individual may provided authorization for use of the captured image, and a storage device 22 for storing the
20 representative image, associated release form.

In the embodiment illustrated the digital capture device 10 is a digital camera that typically captures high resolution digital images and the display device is a personal d assistant (PDA). The PDA is provided with a display screen for displaying a representative image 16 of the captured high
25 resolution digital image captured by the camera. The digital camera 10 may communicate (transfer) information to the PDA in any appropriate manner, for example by direct or wireless connection. The digital camera may produce the representative image or the PDA may produce the representative image. The PDA preferably as illustrated with provided with a least one release form in
30 memory for display. The PDA is provided with appropriate software for associating at least one representative image with a release form. The representative image and associate release form are displayed as a single

document. In the embodiment illustrated the PDA has one or input devices for entering information in to the PDA and for association with the release form, example but not limited to, touch pad or stylus. In this way a indicudicial that has been captured in the captured digital image can provide authorization to use the image by electronically signing the release form. The authorized release form then is stored locally or on a separate storage device 22, for example, but not limited to, a personal computer. A printing device 52 may also be connected to device 14 for printing of hard copy release forms to be signed.

Fig. 2 shows a block diagram of the preferred workflow for managing photo releases. The digital capture device 10 captures an image at step 30. Subsequently, the image data are resampled (e.g., via thumbnail or JPEG2000 standard) at step 32 produce a representative image, associated with the original image at step 34. In the embodiment illustrated this resampling is done by the image capture device. The representative image at step 36 is transmitted to an electronic display device 14 which in the embodiment illustrated is a PDA. The received representative image 16 is used in conjunction with appropriate associated release information 18.

Once the representative image 16 is resident in the electronic display device 14, individuals or objects of interest requiring release are identified. 36. The system 10 through the PDA or other devices supports various methods for identification of different individuals within the same photograph (captured image) and the same individual in multiple photographs 37. This may be accomplished manually or through the use of a variety of image processing algorithms on the device 14, camera 10 or storage device 22 – including, but not limited to face recognition and metadata technologies. In the preferred embodiment the software for identification of individuals is provided on device 14.

The software on device 14 supports at least two different mechanisms for producing a signed copy of the release form. The first is by hardcopy. Once the image(s) are associated the release form/document and the terms have been modified appropriately, the form could be sent to a print device 52 – thereafter reviewed 54, signed 56 and handled like a conventional release

form (except that the sub-sampled images will be associated with – and the photographer will have the option of showing within - the document).

A second mechanism associates the appropriate release form/document with the image for which the release is being sought 40 and electronically displays 42 that release form and the sub sampled (representative) 5 image for which the release applies. The individual that is to sign the release form, reviews 44 and if approved electronically signs 46 the electronic copy of the release form. Once signed, no further changes can be made to the document and it is saved in a non-editable format 48 storage device 22 and may be 10 associated with a digital watermarking technology for further security 50. The non-editable format can then be printed or emailed to the individual (this may be done automatically if the individual provides an email address and the personal digital device has modem or similar communications ability). The signed release is always associated with the captured high resolution image that is stored on 15 storage device 22. The signed release information is associated as meta data to the captured original digital image.

One implementation for identifying individuals within a representative image is shown in Fig. 3 wherein successive display screens of the display device 14 is illustrated. First a representative image is shown by display 20 screen 60 and an individual would identify an area by clicking or dragging a stylus over the region of interest as shown by display screen 62. This would result in an indication that a signature was needed as shown by display screen 64. The individual associated with the region of interest could then offer an electronic signature as shown by display screen 66. A horizontal orientation is also shown 25 by display screen 68. Once the signature has been obtained, an indication that a signature was needed would be replaced by an indication that the signature had been attained as illustrated by display screen 70. This process would then be repeated for each of the required multiple signatures, the system is able to identify through a visual representation of individuals who have and who have not yet 30 signed a release form.

It is to be understood that various changes and modification may be made without departing from the present invention. For example, while separate

devices have been shown for the PDA and the storage and printing devices, these devices may be provided in any combined manner. The PDA and storage device may comprise a portable personal computer that may have printing capabilities. Alternatively, the digital capture device and PDA may be combined as a single
5 device. The present invention is defined by the claim that following.

PARTS LIST

10	image capture device
12	image processing device
14	display device
16	representative image
18	image release information
20	input device
22	data storage device
30	capture image(s)
32	resampled image
34	associate representative image with original
36	transfer representative image to electronic display
37	identify individuals
38	group images
40	associate image(s) with legal document
42	display agreement with images
44	printed document
46	signs electronic document
48	signature block
50	digital watermarked format
52	printing device
54	review printed document
56	sign printed document
60	display screen
62	display screen
64	display screen
66	display screen
68	display screen
70	display screen